

# Moral values and taxes top GOP voter agenda

## Party urged to target Clinton spending policies

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Republicans should make President Clinton's tax-and-spend policies — not his scandals — a national issue in the November election if they want to expand their majority in Congress, an internal GOP analysis says.

Voters are saying that while they approve of his job performance, they don't trust him and want to keep a GOP majority to check him, according to the analysis, which was based on an internal national voter survey.

"Clinton is the one way for us to nationalize the congressional elections," confided one of several GOP pollsters who jointly sampled 800 likely voters for the Republican National Committee.

"We should tell voters that Clinton introduced \$150 billion in taxes and spending in his latest budget, and say this election should be a check on what Bill Clinton is doing," he said.

"The president seems on the verge of becoming an electoral liability" to Democrats, the survey concluded, noting that among all voters, a Clinton visit to a congressional district was more likely to hurt than help the Democratic candidate. The negative impact was higher among white voters and among undecided voters in a generic ballot.

One of the most striking findings is that moral values and tax cuts are the highest priority issues for Republicans and the lowest for Democrats.

Although raising the Clinton scandals as an issue helps excite GOP voters, such an attack risks arousing even more Democrats to go to the polls to defend their leader, the analysis warns.

Party analysts noted that both Democratic and GOP fund raising is believed to have spiked upward following House Speaker Newt Gingrich's recent fusillades at Mr. Clinton.

Nonpresidential year elections normally yield low turnouts by registered Republicans and Democrats, and an almost negligible number of independents, or so-called "swing voters." So each party's maxim is: Motivate our voters, not theirs.

The GOP document also suggests that Republicans are making some headway on their education message, but Democrats still have a 13-point edge on that issue. Last June, Republicans trailed Democrats by 21 points on education.

The survey reflects what Republican National Chairman Jim Nicholson has been

saying to Republicans in Congress since late last year: Taxes, education and moral values will be crucial campaign issues.

Mr. Clinton's potential role in helping the GOP was evident from the poll question that, without naming candidates, asked if the respondent would vote for a Democrat or a Republican if the election were held tomorrow. Democrats had an edge of 4 percentage points.

But when the poll reminded respondents that Mr. Clinton is president and then asked who they want to run Congress, Republicans came out ahead by 14 percentage points.

Observing that the "president is taking a bigger hit on his personal ratings," the analysis noted that his "personal approval has deteriorated . . . to a new low," with 40 percent approving of him and 50 percent disapproving.

At about this time in his presidency, Ronald Reagan's personal approval was over 80 percent, about 20 points ahead of his job

approval rating, while Mr. Clinton's personal approval is "running roughly 20 points behind his job approval," the analysis says.

In deciding how to vote for congressional candidates, GOP voters made a "decline in moral values" their most frequently mentioned priority, followed by tax cuts. "Drugs and the crime they cause" was a distant third.

Democrats gave moral values and taxes their lowest priority, and put Social Security and Medicare on top, followed by the economy and jobs, with education a close third in the internal GOP poll.

When the survey asked voters which one of seven options the GOP leadership should focus on before the election, improving public schools placed first for undecided voters and second with Republicans. Cutting taxes was second with generic undecided voters but first with Republicans.

"Our base and our target crossover voters share the same top priorities, but our base is more deeply interested in tax cuts while the generic undecideds, and Democrats for that matter, care more intensely about schools," the GOP analysis said. "But the key point is that both need to be core parts of our fall message."

From a list, voters were asked which item would make them most likely to vote for a GOP congressional candidate. "Requiring welfare recipients to work" placed far ahead with all respondents.